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ABSTRACT

The levels of acculturation of biracial and monoracial Hispanics were examined in college students to determine the level of family or community influence in defining racial identification for the biracial individual. The sample was composed of Hispanic undergraduate students currently enrolled at the University of Kansas. Survey packets were mailed to 467 randomly selected students who described themselves as Hispanic, and 149 (32%) replied. Two measures were used for this study: (1) Majority-Minority Relations Survey (MMRS); and (2) a biographical questionnaire. Results show differences in the acculturation of biracial individuals in that they were often acculturated into the majority culture with few connections to Hispanic communities. Another significant finding is that biracial individuals who maintain the Spanish language are more connected to the minority culture and have lower levels of acculturation to the majority culture. Certain familial influences can maintain a higher level of ethnicity. (Contains three tables and seven references.) (SLD)

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Biracial identification, familial influence and levels of acculturation

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Abstract

This study examined levels of acculturation between biracial and monoracial Hispanics to determine the level of familial/community influence in defining racial identification for the biracial individual. This study found that there were differences in biracial individuals acculturation in that they were often acculturated into the majority culture and had few connections to Hispanic communities. Another significant finding was that biracial individuals who maintained the Spanish language were more connected to the minority culture and lower levels of acculturation.

Biracial identification, familial influence

and levels of acculturation

This study examined levels of acculturation between biracial and monoracial Hispanics to determine the level of familial/community influence in defining racial identification for the biracial individual.

Biracial is defined as an individual who is born of a mixed or interracial marriage/relationship. For biracial individuals, society places value and judgment on race and often forces children to have congruent identities with physical characteristics. However, for the biracial Hispanic, physical characteristics become blurred and their individual identities are developed/influenced by other factors such as familial influence and/or community involvement. However, no research has been conducted as to what specific variables influence Hispanic biraciality and how these individuals identify themselves within the Hispanic culture.

Acculturation has been found to measure ethnicity/minority group identification. Acculturation is defined as a process that occurs when an individual of an ethnic minority relinquishes traditional values, customs, beliefs and behaviors of the minority culture and adopts those of the majority culture (Sodowsky et al, 1991). Acculturation of a minority individual can be measured on two dimensions: the degree of assimilation to the majority culture and the degree of retention of the minority culture (Berry, 1980; LeVine & Padilla, 1980; Mendoza & Martinez, 1981; Sanchez & Atkinson, 1983). One important aspect of Hispanic acculturation is familial influence. The family is generally the single most influential reference group for most Hispanic individuals throughout life, and strong familism is a culture-specific value exhibited by Hispanics. (Padilla, Ruiz & Alvarez, 1975; Parrillo, 1966; Sabogal, et al, 1987). Given that strong familism is a distinctive feature of Hispanic culture,

(defined by Sabogal et al, 1987, as a strong identification and attachment of individuals with their families and strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity and solidarity), it follows that a measure of Hispanic acculturation would be an indicator familial influence.

Method

Participants

The sample was comprised of Hispanic undergraduate students currently enrolled at the University of Kansas. Survey packets were mailed to 467 randomly selected students who identified themselves as being Hispanic through the office of the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The age range was from 18 to 31 years with a mean age of 20.8. The sample was comprised of 63.2% (91) females and 36.8% (53) males. The sample consisted of 47.1% (65) Freshman, 18.1% (25) Sophomore, 15.9% (22) Juniors, and 18.1% (25) senior. Within the sample, 42.9% (63) identified themselves as biracial or having one non-Hispanic parent and 57.1% (84) identified themselves as monoracial or having two Hispanic parents.

A data sampling plan was followed to control for data errors and to collect a representative sample of individuals for the study. The first part of the plan consisted of random selection of subjects which was implemented to ensure representiveness of the population surveyed. Second, Cohen's table of n to detect r-by-t test (1969, pg. 116) was used for the estimation of adequate sample size that could be analyzed by ANCOVA to reduce standard error of the mean and increase in the precision of generalizable results. An approximate N of 112 was determined for $p > 0.50$ for B values of .10. An additional 30% increase of N was added to aid in the reduction of restriction of range within the sample size as a result of sampling only University of Kansas undergraduate students. This provided a total N

of 145 necessary for the study. An N of 149 was returned giving a 32% return rate of mailed surveys.

Instruments

Two measures were used for this study: Majority-Minority Relations Survey (MMRS), an alternate form of Sodowsky and Plake's (1991) American-International Relations Survey which measures acculturation, and a biographical questionnaire developed by this researcher.

The MMRS was chosen for the study as a result of an extensive literature review which indicated that this measure provided the highest reliability for the constructs of acculturation.

Results

For biracial individuals the mean (M) Acculturation Score on the MMRS was 2.16 on a scale from one to six. The standard deviation (SD) was .568. The scale score of one represents an individual who is highly acculturated or who is almost completely assimilated within the majority culture. For monoracial individuals the mean (M) Acculturation score on the MMRS was 2.79 and the standard deviation (SD) was .710. The scale score of six represents an individual who is minimally acculturated or one who remains entrenched within their minority culture. The range of scores for all individuals on the MMRS was 1.26 for the lowest score and 4.60 for the highest score. All scores fell within these two range scores. The results for the MMRS is presented in Table 1.

The scoring indicated that on average, the monoracial respondents were moderately assimilated into the majority culture but continued to preserve aspects of their own culture and identity, however the biracial respondents were highly assimilated into the majority culture.

The means and standard deviation scores for the biracial respondents reflected higher assimilation into the majority culture than the monoracial respondents on the three subscales with the same scoring described above (Sodowsky et al, 1991). For the subscale of Perceived Prejudice M=2.41, SD=.88; indicating that the respondents felt accepted by the majority culture. For the subscale Acculturation M=3.09, SD=.797; indicating that the respondents were somewhat less accepting of the majority people and their culture. For the last subscale, Language Usage, M=1.68, SD=.727; indicating that respondents generally preferred to speak English and had lowered proficiency and usage of the Spanish language.

The ANCOVA's presented data that indicated that certain aspects were influential in biracial identity with the variables of speaking Spanish, association with Hispanic community, extended family residing in home and relatives outside of the United States impacting an individuals racial identity and acculturation level. These results are presented in Table 2.

The data presented in Table 3 demonstrates that the MMRS scores were inversely correlated with many of the demographic variables. The results indicated that certain variables had a major influence in the level of acculturation. The demographic variables that were significantly correlated with the MMRS were; parental education, association with Hispanic community, language, having extended family members living within the home and having relatives outside the United States. These variables decreased the levels of acculturation and increased Hispanic identity.

Biracial respondents were somewhat different in familial make up. Higher percentages of biracial respondents identified themselves as being central American (60%) while monoracial respondents identified themselves as Mexican (80%). Biracial

families had fewer children in the family, higher incomes, less association with Hispanic community and college Hispanic support groups.

Discussion

This study found that biracial identity can be measured by acculturation and that certain familial influences can maintain a higher level of ethnicity within one's culture. The biracial individuals within this study were different than their monocultural counterparts in that they often were not connected to Hispanic communities, did not speak Spanish, and did not have relatives who were not citizens of the united states.

Research in the area of biraciality is sporadic and incomplete. Most studies looking at biracial individuals are qualitative in nature, contain no control groups for monoracial children at similar developmental stages and have small numbers. Future research efforts in this area should incorporate the research findings of the various qualitative studies and focus on more qualitative and quantitative studies. with these initial results in mind.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviation Scores for the MMRS and subscales for Monoracial and Biracial Respondents

Variable		MMRS		Perceived Prejudice		Accult-uration		Lang Usage	
	N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Monoracial	63	2.16	.568	2.03	.749	2.72	.653	1.55	.503
Biracial	84	2.78	.710	2.71	.873	3.38	.781	2.03	.765

Table 2

Summary of Demographic Variables and Biracial Identity After Controlling for Acculturation.

Source of Variance	Adjusted SS	df	MS	F
Covariate				
MMRS	81.754	1	81.754	3.926
Variables				
Father	473.872	7	67.696	3.692
Mother	150.638	7	21.520	1.042
Hispanic Comm	108.601	2	54.301	2.685*
Assoc w/ Comm	124.010	2	62.005	3.082*
Sex	21.362	2	10.681	.513
Age	352.791	14	25.199	1.247
Education level	121.864	5	24.373	1.186
# of Children in Fam	267.351	13	20.565	.994
Birth Order	39.844	7	5.692	.266
Speak Spanish	49.098	2	24.549	1.190*
Speak fluently	89.052	2	44.526	2.187*

Table 1 continued:

Source of Variance	Adjusted SS	df	MS	F
Spanish First Lang	40.965	2	20.483	.990**
Godparents	.958	1	.958	.046*
Relatives within home	39.659	2	19.830	.386
Relatives outside USA	13.52	2	6.761	.324*

* $p < .001$

Table 3

Summary of Pearson Correlations for Demographic Variables and the Majority-Minority Relations Survey

Variable	MMRS	Perceived Prejudice	Acculturation	Lang Usage
Education				
Father	-.2289**	-.2374**	-.1927*	-.0506
Mother	-.2486**	-.2338**	-.2299**	-.1076
Hispanic Comm	-.2184**	-.2085**	-.1993**	-.0939
Assoc w/ Comm	-.3952***	-.2842***	-.5422***	-.1599
Personal				
Sex	-.1587	-.1991*	-.1174	.0678
Age	-.0506	.0043	-.1288	-.0566
Education level	-.0956	-.0501	-.1430	-.0887
# of Child Fam	.0768	.0632	.1094	-.0154
Birth Order	.0300	.0253	.0504	-.0244
Speak Spanish	-.3634***	-.2836***	-.3065***	.4605**
Speak fluently	-.4224***	-.2678**	-.3748***	-.7785***
Span First Lang	-.3533***	-.2438**	-.2427**	-.7097***

Table 3 continued

Variable	MMRS	Perceived Prejudice	Accult- uration	Lang Usage
Godparents	-.0496	.0091	-.1248	-.0757
Relatives/home	-.2808***	-.2455**	-.2070	-.3114***
Relatives/ USA	-.2565**	-.2178**	-.1975*	-.2839***

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$